(a) the details of field tests conducted by various National Agricultural Research Institutes for trying different crops including new or different cash crops in the arid and desert regions of Rajasthan;

(b) what are the new or alternate crops that can be introduced in the State in the near future; and

(c) whether these crops will yield high productivity inspite of the drought like conditions of the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Field tests including varietal evaluation trials, agronomic trials, nutrient management trials, diseases and insects management trials, etc. have been conducted by various National Agricultural Research Institutes in the arid and desert regions of Rajasthan on different crops such as pasture grasses (*Lasiurus sp.; Cenchrus sp. Sehima sp.),* cereals (pearl millet, sorghum, maize, wheat), pulses (mothbean, clusterbean, mungbean, chickpea, cowpea), oilseeds (castor, sesame, mustard, sunflower), fruit crops ('ber', date-palm, 'bael', 'aonla', drumstick, *Citrullus* sp.), Oil-yielding shrub crops ('jojoba', *Jatropha* sp.), fodder shrubs (*Atriplex* sp.), fodder tress (*Acacia* sp., *Prosopis* sp., *Leucaena* sp.), Vegetables(chilies, cowpea), spices ('ajwain', dill, *Nigella* sp.) etc.

(b) New or alternate crops that can be introduced depending upon moisture availability are jojoba, datepalm, 'ber', *Atriplex,* 'ajwain', dill, *Nigella,* etc.

(c) It is expected that these crops will be better equipped to cope with moisture stress on account of drought.

Package for farmers

†3186. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently announced a new package for the farmers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) the amount to be provided under the package; and

(d) the period of the package?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (d) Government have recently announced various measures for providing credit related relief to farmers. This includes reduction in the rate of interest on agriculture loans to 9% per annum on crop loans upto a ceiling of Rs. 50.000/-, introduction of refinancing to the District Central Cooperative Banks, formation of a consortium of banks to negotiate with the manufacturers and dealers of tractors and other agricultural equipments for securing maximum possible discounts and concessions for farmers borrowing loans, tapping the potential of extensive network of post offices for disbursement of agricultural credit. These measures will usher in a new economic order for agriculture sector with progressive reduction in the interest burden on farmers. The Government has also recently announced minimum support prices for various Kharif crops for 2003-2004.

Opening dairy in Maharashtra

†3187. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to open dairy in Maharashtra during the financial year 2003-2004;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of the financial allocations made, so far, in this regard; and

(d) by when this proposal is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) The Government of Maharashtra has informed that it has no plan to open dairy in the State during financial year 2003-2004.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.